

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2832

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to eligibility for educational opportunity grants.

Brief Description: Changing eligibility for educational opportunity grants.

Sponsors: Representatives McMorris, Carlson and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/1/00, 2/2/00 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/5/00 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes the eligibility requirement of living in an area of the state served by a branch campus.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Carlson, Republican Co-Chair; Kenney, Democratic Co-Chair; Lantz, Democratic Vice Chair; Radcliff, Republican Vice Chair; Dunn; Edmonds; Esser and Gombosky.

Staff: Erika Prager (786-7120).

Background:

The educational opportunity grant program was created in 1990 as part of the branch campus legislation. The Higher Education Coordinating Board recommended that the program be created based on the assumption that size, and therefore, construction and operating costs of the proposed branch campuses could be reduced if students who were placebound were encouraged to enroll at existing colleges and universities and utilize what would otherwise be unused capacity.

To be eligible, students must be residents of Washington; live in an area of the state served by a branch campus; have already completed an associate of arts degree or achieved junior standing; have demonstrated financial need; and not be pursuing a degree in theology or religious studies.

An eligible student may receive up to \$2,500 per academic year. Students can attend any four-year public or private baccalaureate institution that has space, except a branch campus. Students are restricted to upper division, baccalaureate work only.

The Legislature appropriated \$5.84 million in the 1999-2001 budget solely for the educational opportunity grant program. Approximately 1,000 students receive this grant each year.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board is conducting a comprehensive study of the program that will be completed by July 2000. The board is expected to bring forward recommendations to the Legislature regarding possible changes to the current program based on the study findings.

Summary of Bill:

The eligibility requirements for the educational opportunity grant are modified. Students are no longer required to live in an area of the state served by a branch campus.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Specific geographic limitations are not needed. The intent is for placebound students within the state to qualify for the educational opportunity grant. Many community college students in northeastern Washington do not qualify for the grant, but are placebound. Currently, many of the counties served by a branch campus are urban. By not requiring students to live in an area served by a branch campus, placebound students in rural counties such as Stevens and Okanogan may be eligible.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Cathy McMorris, prime sponsor; and Tom Parker, Washington Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 26 members: Representatives H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Barlean, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; Alexander; Benson; Clements; Cody; Crouse; Gombosky; Grant; Kagi; Keiser; Kenney; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; Lisk; McIntire; McMorris; Mulliken; Regala; Rockefeller; Ruderman; Sullivan; Tokuda and Wensman.

Staff: Jack Daray (786-7178).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Higher Education: No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Since the opening of programs in "rural" counties by the community and technical colleges, there has been an increase in the number of students who are earning their Associate of Arts degree and who could be eligible for assistance under the Educational Opportunity Grant if the geographical restrictions in current statute were removed. This would provide the resources to access higher education for students who otherwise would be unable to advance beyond the Associate of Arts degree.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Cathy McMorris, prime sponsor.